

From the Road ...

By Clint Lancaster, Compliance Consultant

One aspect of the compliance consultation is a set of recommended practices we discuss with the manufacturer. These items are not required to be remedied for certification, however, they are practices which, if implemented, will help reduce exposure and risk to the company. These recommendations are provided in the table below. I'd like to discuss a couple of those recommendations in particular - supplier's component verification and the Trailer Safety Industry Coalition (TSIC) wheel attachment practice.

In light of the increasing number of off-shore commodity type products, *i.e.* safety chains, axle springs, couplers, etc., we need to ensure they meet the capacities and specifications required by our industry. The Engineer's Corner column in this issue of *TRACKS* reflects a perfect example of the issue we face. Establishing a verification program for the capacities of your supplier's component parts accomplishes a number safeguards. It can help reduce your risk by avoiding possible opportunities for failure, help eliminate warranties, and reflects your due diligence and attention if litigation was to arise. A supplier verification program can take on a number of approaches from corporate-wide programs to only key component parts. At a minimum, we recommend that a copy of the testing data be obtained from your component part manufacturer reflecting the item meets the minimum standards established for that product. Many manufacturers provide it automatically while others have it available on request. If you ask and don't get it or get the "run-around," it may be worth thinking about whether saving a few cents is worth it in the long run.

Next, is the TSIC recommended practices for wheel attachment on axle hubs. This information is available on www.natm.com as well as the TSIC website (www.trailersafety.com). Some key points are to establish a process which can torque the wheels to spec at least twice - and three times is better. Because of the metal-relaxing properties of the stud, wheel and nut, space the intervals by about 24 hours. Another key issue is for those manufacturers that ship their trailers without the wheels mounted. In this case, a program of communication and training needs to be developed for the dealers that are mounting those wheels. It has been established by NHTSA that it is the manufacturers' responsibility to ensure the wheels have been mounted on the trailer properly.

While traveling around the country visiting our members

I had the opportunity to attend the FabTech/AWS conference in Atlanta. Along with Allison, NATM Membership Director, we spent time identifying manufacturing equipment providers that can support our industry and meet our specific needs. Also, we were able to build on some relationships with other organizations and focus their resources on our industry. These organizations included the American Welding Society (AWS) www.aws.org, Society of Manufacturing Engineers (SME) www.sme.org, and the Fabrication and Manufacturing Association (FMA) www.fma.org. Each of these organizations have key assets to help us in our operations. We look forward to seeing them around our industry and working to develop some synergies between our organizations.

NATM RECOMMENDATIONS

- Copy of NATM Guidelines is available.
- A system for assigning Gross Vehicle Weight Ratings (GVRW) is available and covers all current production models, taking into consideration axle, tire and rim capacities.
- A system for assigning Shipping Weights is available and covers all current production models, taking into consideration all options installed on each model.
- Weigh slips are available and adequate to justify Shipping Weights and GVWR assignments for all models.
- TSIC recommendations for wheel attachments are available.
- Quality Control Program has been developed.
- **Supplier data verifying compliance of required safety equipment is available, including:**
 - Safety chain/cable capacity for each type used - attachment
 - Lighting (tail light, stop light, license plate light, clearance light) meets NHTSA Regulations.
 - Axle capacity verified
 - Tire capacity verified for each tire used
 - Rim capacity verified for each rim used
 - Coupler capacity for each type used
 - Wiring color-code is standard and lights are tested
 - Manufacturer is aware of ANSI A119.2 requirements if they manufacture living quarters
 - Manufacturer is aware of ANSI Z535.4 requirements for any labels applied